



TAGALONG TOURS OF AUSTRALIA

NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 2018

Hi Everyone,

At this time each year we put together some thoughts and reflect on our adventures over the last 12 months. Our tours once again took in Cape York and the Simpson Desert with the Transcontinental Tour unfortunately having to be cancelled at short notice due to an injury to my knee. John was busy up in the Cape at that time, so he was unable to slot into that tour.

We look forward to catching up with our old friends again down the track and also we are excited with the prospect of meeting new ones in the future.

All the best for a Happy Christmas and a Safe & Healthy New Year in the Aussie Bush. Cheers Paul & John.

CAPE YORK: 2018 IN REVIEW

Our four tours up to the Cape were conducted again in the months of June to September after a relatively good wet season.

The creeks and rivers on the Old Telegraph Track were all flowing with many of them providing a challenge for our customers with the usual suspects being Palm Creek, Ducie Creek and Gunshot Creek.

Each year more tar sealed sections of road appear up in the Cape and it's our view that this will detract from the overall adventure and remoteness of the place in the future.

Many of our customers travelled to Cairns from the southern states to join the tours and many were able to take the time to enjoy the delights of the Far North before and after their Cape York experience.

In June, a Bathurst couple on their way north to join one of our tours, got as far as Townsville and were unfortunately rammed into by another vehicle after a robbery. This sadly ruined their holiday and we hope that they can come up north again one day and finish the whole journey all the way up to the Tip.

Recoveries were minimal due to careful driving and effective vehicle operation.

There was a funny incident on one of the Cape tours where a couple had managed to misplace their car keys just at departure time. The ensuing comedy routine kept everyone entertained for about an hour as the car and camper trailer were searched. In the end, to the dismay of the husband, the keys were found, safely tucked away in the wife's handbag. There is no recording of the conversation in their vehicle as the convoy eventually got under way, but we reckon it would have been gold.



MORE FROM CAPE YORK 2018



Another couple created a story that is also worth sharing.

The husband for the first 4 days of the tour was complaining about the foul tasting toothpaste that his wife had packed in his toiletries bag.

It turns out it was a well known but extremely bad tasting antiseptic cream that he was using to brush his teeth. We will never know if they were whiter as a result.

John and I prepare our tour vehicles very thoroughly in order to be super reliable tour leaders, but from time to time, we experience some bad luck of our own along the way.

In June up in the Cape, I managed to unfortunately shred a tyre on my Toyota Land Cruiser not far from the Croc Tent. I was very grateful for my on-the-spot pit crew who made short work of the job of changing the wheel and tyre. I had to remind my travelling companions however that the Ferrari Formula 1 team completes the same task in about 8 seconds!!

In August it was John's turn with bad luck. He broke an axle in his Nissan Patrol near Sailor Creek on the Old Telegraph Track. The tour group with him were very supportive while his vehicle was recovered and taken to Bamaga for repairs.

We are very grateful that Steve & Jo stepped in as deputy tour leaders for a couple of days until things got back on track. We really appreciated their efforts.



CAPE YORK 2019 TOUR SCHEDULE

2nd June to 19th June

7th July to 24th July

4th Aug to 21st Aug

1st Sept to 18th Sept

Bookings through

www.tagalongtours.com.au





JOIN US ON A TRANSCONTINENTAL ADVENTURE

This is the ultimate outback tour across the country, from watching a sunrise over the blue waters of the Pacific Ocean, travelling through 4 states and 1 territory, through deserts and corner country to enjoy a relaxing sunset over the waters of the Indian Ocean.

TRANSCONTINENTAL EAST - WEST TOUR SCHEDULE

**14th May 2019
to
11th June 2019**

**6th August 2019
to
3rd September 2019**

Bookings through

www.tagalongtours.com.au

TRANSCONTINENTAL 2018

As I explained earlier, it was unfortunate that this year's Transcontinental Tour had to be cancelled at the last minute.

In 2019 however, we are running two tours across the country with the first one in May already fully booked.

The second one will be conducted in August next year and our view is this one will also book well.

This tour is fast becoming a "bucket list item" for many off road adventurers who want to cross the country from the most eastern point to the most western point.

There are not many other companies doing this type of tagalong tour and we believe our itinerary is both challenging and interesting.

We allow camper trailers on this tour despite the fact we cross the Simpson Desert. The reason being, we travel via the Rig Road after making our way north west from Innamincka through the Warburton Crossing and the dunes this way, are more "friendly".

THE SIMPSON DESERT TOURS 2018

Our tours across the Simpson Desert were conducted in April and July of this year.

One of our travelling companions had the misfortune to lose her mobile phone down the drop dunny at Australia's most famous tree, The Burke & Wills Dig Tree.

After a bit of fishing with a steady hand and a sharp eye, the phone was miraculously recovered by Darrell, much to the amazement of everyone and the sheer delight of the owner of the phone.

I have witnessed many types of recoveries in the Simpson Desert over the years, but I don't think I will ever see a successful recovery like that one again.

The April crossing was from east to west and all the members of that tour group I'm sure, will never forget how bad the bush flies were.



MORE FROM THE SIMPSON DESERT 2018

They were almost unbearable from dawn to dusk. It meant that meals had to be prepared earlier in the mornings and later in the evenings.

There are several theories why they were so bad this year, but there had been good rain in the region in March and this along with the hot weather was the main reason for the problem.

Good rain had also fallen in the Winton area in north west Queensland in March and this created a situation where floodwaters had made their way down the Georgina and Diamantina Rivers in April. This resulted in major flooding around Birdsville with all roads from the south and east being cut.

Because of this, our tour group had to spend an extra day in Innamincka before a decision was made to head back east into Queensland and take a long detour around through Eromanga and Windorah.

The Diamantina River was still over the road in several places on the way into Birdsville but with careful driving, all the vehicles were able to negotiate their way across the flooded river.

I was surprised to have a birthday cake presented to me by the tour group at the Birdsville Pub. That's certainly a birthday that I will never forget! Thanks again folks for organising that.

The next three days after leaving Birdsville saw us crossing the Simpson via the French Line with its 1100 sand dunes and most were negotiated successfully with very few incidents.

There were a couple of recoveries however required by the adventurous few who went out to play on Big Red on the free day before our departure from Birdsville.

The water at Dalhousie Springs was almost too hot to swim in and a few members of the party chose the cold shower option instead.

The first July crossing was from east to west early in the month. The QAA Line to Poeppel Corner was badly chopped up and very slow and difficult with many deep potholes on the dunes. The 40km section from Poeppel to the Knolls Track junction was also very slow and bumpy so a decision was made to use the Rig Road on this crossing and although it's about 100 kms longer, it proved to be a much better option for the vehicles and passengers.

The damage to the dunes had been caused by the large number of 4WD vehicles crossing the Simpson Desert to attend the Big Red Bash in early July. This in itself wouldn't have been a major problem but unfortunately many of them were towing trailers and also they didn't appear to have the correct tyre pressures on their vehicles, causing them to bounce and dig their way forward.



SIMPSON DESERT 2019 TOUR SCHEDULE

5th April to 16th April (E/W)

19th April to 30th April (W/E)

21st June to 2nd July (W/E)

Bookings through

www.tagalongtours.com.au

AND MORE FROM THE SIMPSON DESERT 2018

Another factor was the Porsche Cayenne rally across the Simpson in June which also flogged the dunes to pieces.

The 4WD Porches, driving day and night, completed the journey in 2 days from Birdsville to Dalhousie Springs so those who know the area would be able to imagine how much damage this pace would have caused the dunes. Our tours usually take 3 days to do that leg, so those Porsches must have been flying.

Due to the condition of the tracks and the extra distance, our journey west across the Desert was slower than usual so a camp site at Purnie Bore was required. The temperatures were around zero most nights with one night getting down to 4 degrees below.

Our swim at Dalhousie Springs was a much more pleasant proposition this time with the hot springs warming us from the cold. The colder days also meant little or no flies, woo-hoo.

Another memorable sight at the Dig Tree on this trip was a hamburger truck. One of the local horse riding clubs had seized the opportunity to raise some funds taking advantage of the amount of traffic leaving Birdsville around that time after the Bash. I imagined how welcome this sight would have been for Burke & Wills when they staggered into that camp site 157 years ago.

On the return Desert crossing from west to east we used the Rig Road again as the National Park Rangers at Dalhousie Springs advised us that the conditions were still quite bad on the French Line.

The Rig Road is a more scenic route in my view and certainly has very little traffic, if any. Going this way, we also get to see the Lone Gum, which is actually a Coolabah tree that stands in an isolated spot in the southern desert dune country, far removed from the nearest watercourse.

The crossing was relatively drama free with only a few recoveries and reversing back actions required. Our arrival at Big Red was late in the afternoon and consequently we arrived in Birdsville just on dusk.

That night we were subjected to a severe dust storm some time after midnight and all our tents that hadn't blow over, were filled with fine sand and dust. A few lucky ones had booked into a cabin, so they were spared the excitement. A couple of days later when we arrived at Innamincka, there were cabins booked all round as the red dust and the constant strong winds had taken their toll on the group.

